'68

THE TOWER

The Tower

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TEARS AND MYSTERY

My life is full of tears and mystery.
I close my eyes and disappear.
And each man's story is my history,
And every moment is a tear.

See there the silver river flowing to the sea,
And there, the children playing by.
And no one knows what these things are going to be
And no one dares to question why.
(Will they grow up to live like men,
And will the river reach the sky?)

See there the rolling ocean lapping up the rain;
Each raindrop makes the ocean grow.
And no one knows and no one ever can explain
Which makes the silver river flow.
(Is it the rain that shows the way,
Or does the ocean make it go?)

John David Harris

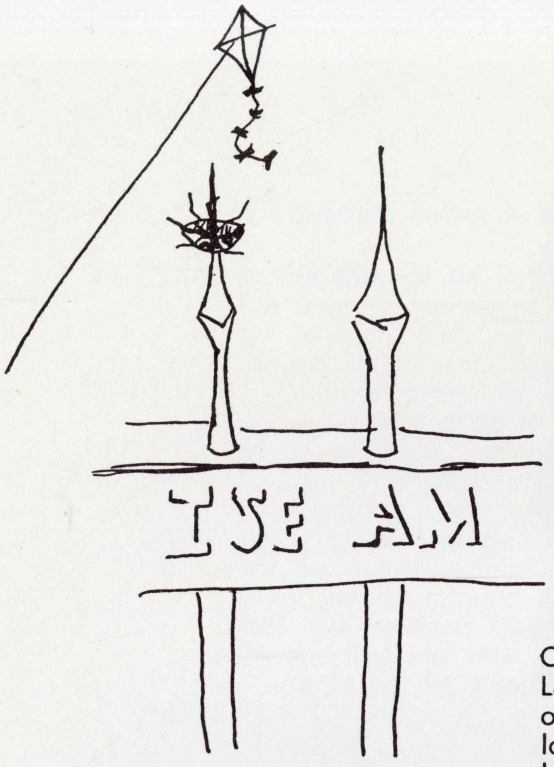
"WINTER'S COMING ON . . ."

It's that girl business again—
A secret siege, and finally surrender.
I sent her home last night,
Mutual contract, you know.
"There's nothing between us,
We'd better stop, don't you think?"
"Yes . . .," she said, "Yes . . . maybe we'd . . ."
"Okay, here's your picture—
Now run upstairs and get my records."

I bought a brand new coat once—
Liked it a lot, wore it
All winter long, it seems.
Spring came, and there were
Lots of other coats I saw.
Got to where I didn't particularly
Pay any attention to mine anymore.
True to form, I held those things most dear
That I did not possess.
I finally hung up that winter coat . . .
Mother gave it to the Goodwill.
I swear I saw it on a beggar today.

He wouldn't sell it back to me.

Keith Harrelson



Once upon a kite-stick leery
Larry the lady-bug sat more or less
on his haunches so to speak
looking down the long lank white
kite-card and wailing his query
how the hell did i get in this mess?

So he stoutly took his vorpal
heart in head and looked around and
leaped into free-fall at about thirty thousand
millimeters
falling to a quick and sick demise
skewered upon the gate of Paradise
Amusement Park

Charles Culp

sixteen march

. . . what is wrong? . . . why, just now,
did you turn away? . . . because I have looked
at you and found you beautiful—

what else could I have said
because these eyes have seen depth in yours the
god's eyes must have seen too

I'm sorry I don't think all men have souls;
I think I had one once—a long time ago
that morning you laughed in my ear.

Stanley Hamby

handmail carrier

there is little light at sunrise
generally speaking this universe is the color of ash
from three stories up out this window

(perhaps night was a great holocaust
and this morning the people will emerge
charred and screaming on their hands and knees

to wash their brains) in the silence
in this shivering mist that hangs like tinsel
on a dying tree; o my people the world is

not yet born or has died in its sleep.

rather now in stark relief
against the great grayness
as in the beginning,
there is a first man (or
the sole survivor of the gods)
a crippled black man
with early messages dancing
up the wet stone hill
(let me too rise tired
old, black, and grinning)

Cathy Trione

CHORUS FROM A PLAY

In the May of the year,
The May of our nervous hopes
and anxious dreams,
Far past the eternal April
of our certainties,
We grope and grasp at
Glimpses of the half-seen green,
At azure intimations seen
Through the liquid yellow.
We grasp and grope,
We dig our nails into
Every passing mirage
And call ourselves clever to catch
Dreams that are seen
only by the sleeper.

Charles Culp

A NEW DAY

It's a new day, I said,
And raised my chin
To face into a shaft of morning sun.
And in that freshness
Overlooked the stumble in my way
Until the day had seized me by the neck
(Or ankle, as it proved to be)
And insisted on inspection
Of the solid element beneath my feet
(Or nose, as it proved to be).

Prone and pondering the relevance,
In a philosophic vein,
Of the circumstantial evidence,
I conclude:

This new day is old,
I'll lower my gaze in pseudo-humility,
(A defense mechanism)
And follow a path that isn't new
Into a used tomorrow.

Sharon Henderson

MOODY STREET AND THE RIVER AT FIREFLY TIME

I

Because I am yet young enough to play
the old man eating peaches, I can dream
an intersection for the rose and gray
of this fused twilight. I will trace the seam
between the colors with young woman fingers
and try to speak as neither woman nor young
long as this listening shade of evening lingers,
for it comes not lightly and it stays not long.

II

I'll walk me soonly gentle through my town,
for I have strolled this supper-time before
and smelled shut houses. I will walk me down
and sink the day into the river. More
than satiate of dreaming windows, I
will pass as lover every house, content
to only love, and dream a dreamless sky
to ease whether I go or have been sent.

III

These homes are mine, though I can scarcely claim
possession of my own ensuing feet.
Rooted, I shelter them, and hewn, I frame
each cloistered household of my hallowed street.
Yet I enclose as stranger every room,
as stranger, stretch enamoured toward this sky,
And I am not permitted to consume
myself upon these hearths, or dare not try.

IV

So I must pass them all, the staring cells
of Moody Street. Here lies Marie in state,
chalked like Snow-White on her bed, who tells
her chamber walls of love, and longs to hate
the tiny crimson child she flushed away
to Never-Never Land. And here, next-door,
stands old Queen Katherine, chaste in her gray
castle, victorious over Nevermore.

V

Across the street, dimly clamours the house
of an attendent lord, in conversation
with a very well-dressed, six-foot mouse:
"Cinderella's footman? Noble station
Sir, indeed. (Please pardon if my hand
may seem to fumble so and splash the ink.)
Ah yes, tomorrow and tomorrow, and . . .
tomorrow, and . . . Ah yes, another drink.

VI

Ah, but my Lord,what time were out of joint
if we considered time no jointed thing?
They tell me, who have seen its proper point
of turning, that it is a polished ring;
But I am carouselled around the rim
and Pegasus is merciless. I grope
again as some brass promise waxes dim
and flees . . . Yes, I will turn again. And hope."

VII

And soonly gentle now I pass them all . . .
And soon, the gentle hill. Blackbirds bunch forth
(The seasons are so slow, and they so small
to know the time to go and follow North).
A brown cow in her yoke bobs random, low
upon the greening hill. But let me pass
the cow-eyed cow as blackbird, now; although
I'm blind beyond this hillside, let me pass.

VIII

Return as waters to the earth, as storms,
as dews, as sweats that left their skys and filled
the writhing river, wrung from fleshless forms
that cool in sleep to walk the morning chilled
and fat and starched and bloated separate shades.
As twilight's river calls back sweat from bone,
as fireflies wake and wait, and starched light fades,
the patient fleshless earth calls back her own.

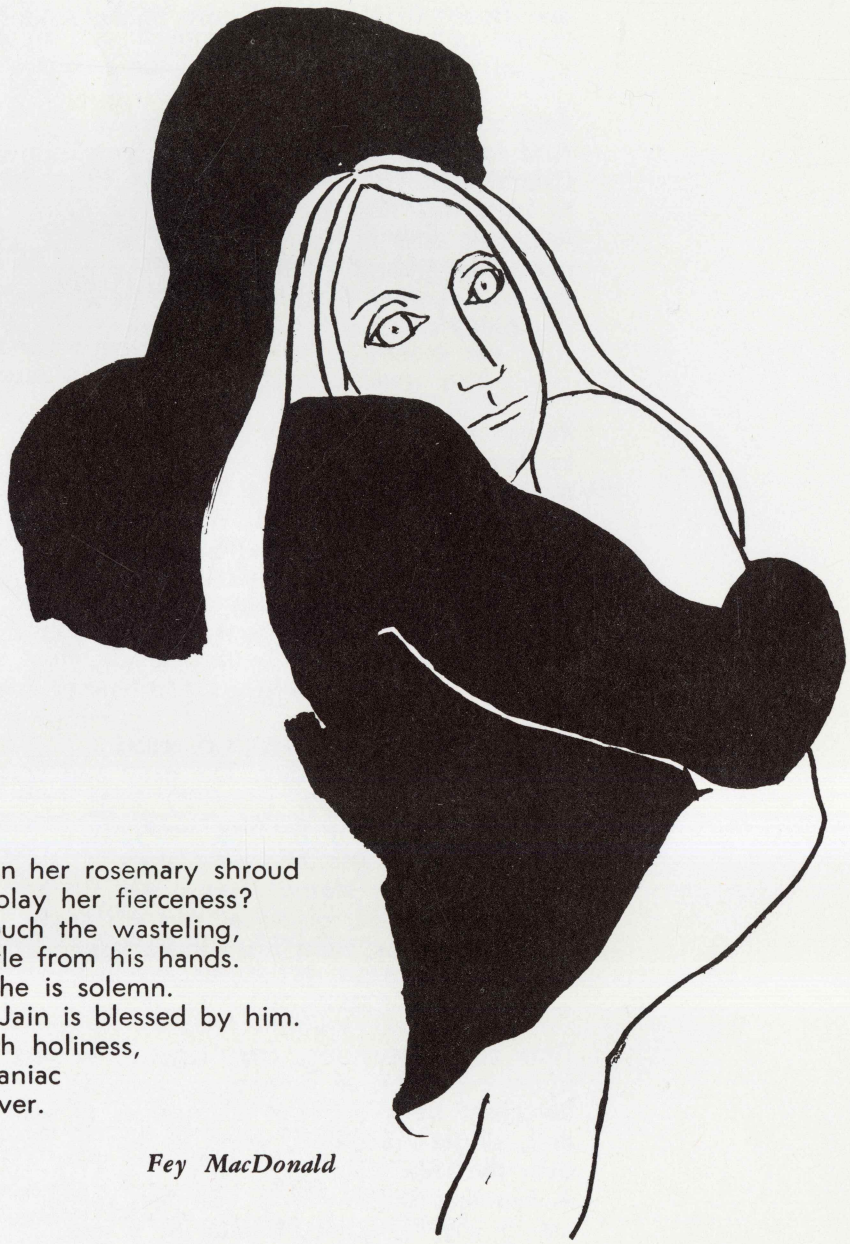
IX

In muted tympany, river and wood
untone this darking day. The gray and rose
in wooded water don a smoky hood
and pray. Only the fireflies interpose
upon this solidness, and even they
but punctuate a stated silence. All
reflections merge, disperse, and sift away
in sifting water, held fast where they fall.

X

Time sits as evening, cross-legged, to fast
upon this bank of dreamless certitude.
Reluctant trees ungreen themselves at last
and, single-shadowed, stand as ash to brood
over the river's surging litany.
A formless shadow of a voiceless name,
stands my reflection, human as a tree,
consumed by water, moved as if by flame.

Jenny Holman



Is there a man where Jain in her rosemary shroud
Like pinkness of a kiss can play her fierceness?
There is a man that could touch the wasteling,
But Jain would rub the gentle from his hands.
In the thunder of her stare he is solemn.
What's grey and rough and Jain is blessed by him.
Within his gentle mind, with holiness,
He will commit the demi-maniac
To asylum of his arms forever.

Fey MacDonald

Outside my window the robins have come too soon.
Winter lingers to laugh as the untimely snow
chills their yearly nesting.

Diane Mahaffey

FRAGMENT OF AN IDYLL

Upon forsaking the misty mats
That starkling August morn
Did set forth Oren the Wonderful
Upon steed shod with fire
Into the land of Dire Circumstance.

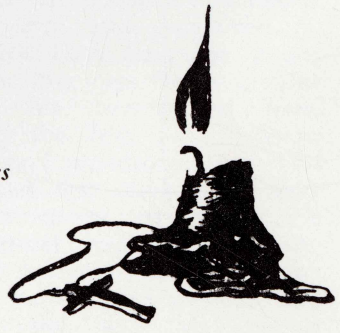
So drugged he down into the Black Wood
Rode in his noble quest

Charles Culp

THE NURSE

The woman set the lamp beside the bed
and raised his narrow arms, weak as willow
Limbs from the fire that burned the thread
Of life in him; and then she fluffed the pillow
That cradled in stained cloth his shaky head.
The odor that reeked from his unwashed breath
Was strange to her, an she, could not shed
A tear, not knowing the angry smell of death.
No, it was only yesterday this man burned
With a different fire, a young lovebird
Who sang beside her in the day, and turned
To her at midnight without a word.
The dark morning drizzle found her there,
Holding a still hand, stroking thin white hair.

Robert Walters



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PRISONER 813—BLOCK 29

By Keith Harrelson

Isadore Goldstein looked pensively at the wire fence thirty yards away. Beyond it was a patch of dry brown weed stalks, a stretch of railroad tracks, and the broad, empty fields of the farms around the camp known as Buchenwald. It was late March, and yet the sky maintained its slowly moving blanket of grey clouds that muffled the sunlight, erasing all but the dimmest shadows on the wet gravel of the Evercise Yard. Isadore pulled his hands up inside his ragged, filthy-grey sleeves and huddled himself sulkily against the biting chill breeze. He kicked at the patch of wet snow near his feet.

Tomorrow would be like today, and today was identical to yesterday. Except Sterne had died today — Sterne, Isadore's closest friend since childhood. Tomorrow Isadore would blacken Sterne's coffin in the Carpentry Shop, and he imagined that he would be a bit bothered when he did it, but, actually, it would just be one of the forty or so that would need blackening, and Isadore told himself that he might not feel different about it at all. He was one of three men who did nothing all day but blacken coffins.

The fence reminded him of the one around the play yard of the nursery school he went to. He used to run up and down alongside it, rattling a stick against it, making the bent wire reverberate with a half-singing sound. And he would always stop to look for the circular spider webs that were sometimes spun in the book-sized squares. When he found one, there were usually big droplets of dew on it, left from the morning sunrise. He remembered how he would sit and study the crystal lacework for as much as an hour. He wondered if this fence had any webs.

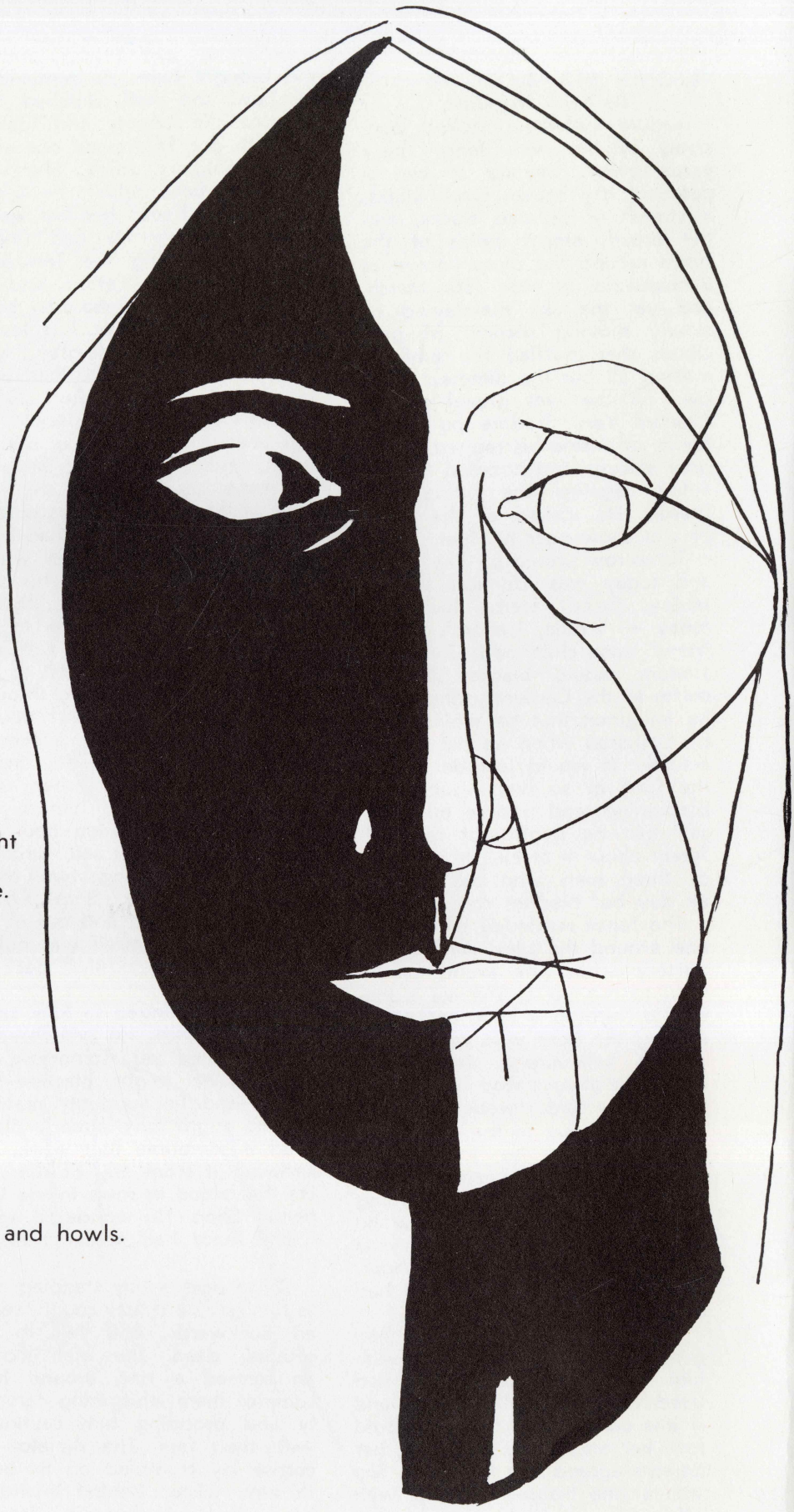
A little girl named Anna had gone to that nursery school with him many years before. He had lived with Anna all his life, and it was only natural that he should love her and marry her when her parents agreed that he might. She was a fine Hebrew beauty, with glistening black hair and olive skin. He had been very happy with her as a wife for six years until they were jointly arrested and brought here. He remembered how she had clutched the slats of the boxcar and looked out with dry, frightened doe eyes at the soldiers' rifles. She was always so beautiful.

But he had seen her last week; she was dying. He had finally found her during the Ten Minute Fraternization Period, and he did not know how he had been able to recognize her. Her lovely black hair was slate-grey with filth and sickness, and her eyes were swollen almost shut. In the mad chaos of wailing people, he had seen her wandering blindly about, trying weakly to cry out his name, as he knew she had done at least twenty times before, without finding him. He had hastened to her and held her whimpering, wasted form with his own emaciated arms, squeezing tighter and tighter, until she sank to the ground, overcome with joy and disbelief. He had dropped to his knees beside her, looking through his own shimmering tears, touching her cracked and quavering lips with his mud-caked finger, stroking her, caressing her, until a Schärfuhrer kicked him in the back with a hob-nailed boot. He had lain in the wet soil, writhing with pain, watching two other guards carry her limp form through the crowd and out of his view. Then he himself was pulled to his feet and pushed back to the shelters.

Isadore continued to look calmly at the fence. He wondered if she had died yet. Tomorrow, he thought, he might blacken her coffin—and he suddenly realized that he might have already blackened it sometime that week, not knowing it from any of the others that stood in rows in the Carpentry Shop. He wondered again if the fence had spider webs in it.

All at once a boy standing next to him gave a chesty cough, swayed backwards, and fell to the ground, dead. The men moved an formed a ring around him, some of them whispering nervously and prodding him cautiously with their feet. The skeleton-like corpse lay crumpled on its back, its arm twisted behind it and its head bent backwards. Isadore studied the dead face, observing the open, toothless mouth, the bald head, and the dull eyes that stared at the forbidding sky. Some guards abruptly pushed their way through the circle, their boots crunching in the gravel, and one of them slipped a rope harness under the armpits of the lifeless body. Its feet bumped oddly as it was dragged away. The striped cap that the boy had worn lay trampled on the ground, until a bony hand reached down and picked it up, straightened it with another bony hand, and settled it carefully on a small, hairless head.

Isadore squinted at the fence, thirty yards away, and told himself that there must be webs in it. They would be wet too . . . He turned it over and over in his mind until it became very important for him to find out. He strained his eyes again, and stretched his neck to try to see a sparkle, a thread. It was no use; he would have to get closer. He looked quickly around to check for any nearby armed Schärfuhrer, and seeing only one, he decided to try it. He began to step slowly toward the fence, his eyes fixed on one wire square. He thought he saw a glimmer there, and he quickened his pace. Someone behind him was alarmed and called out his name, but he paid no attention to it, for he was sure he could see clearly a pattern of droplets, glinting in the sudden cold sunlight. He began to run, unsteadily and half-staggering, and, apart from himself, he marvelled at his own audacity. A great deal of shouting and clamoring filled the air around his ears, but he hardly heard it. Pounding ahead, he extended his arm toward the fence, and was almost close enough to touch it when he was knocked forward by what felt like a white-hot spike being driven into his shouder blade. His eyes were snapped shut and he pitched headlong, landing on a bouncy, singing strand of barbed wire that ripped his left arm and punctured his cheek. His back bent the wrong way, and his eyes fluttered open to see his outstretched hand clutching the fence—right below a huge and wondrously beautiful spider web that spanned the wire rectangle corner to corner. He gave a great shuddering sigh and gazed at it lovingly until his vision became as clouded at the cold German sky and his eyelids drooped closed.



Tears were my cradle-song—
Mother unbalanced, scarred and frailed
Unlike Madonna,
Shattered, un-scarfed with rained fingers,
The keeper of an underling
Was savagely committed.
Her misplaced hands were hardened,
Strapped and held in the whimpered night
That walled her broken words,
Touched all her wretchedness with shame.
The keeper of a bitter wail
Was mewed up in a fist—

Who in tear's asylum,
That tightness and the flush of warmth,
Falls in a fallen world—
Clutching a crude medallion,
Drugged by a life-like scratch and frown
Molested on her cheek—
Shrews the stern commandment,
The tempest charge, coarse in her sky,
Torment from wind to wind
That the stiff eyes say like a moth
Through screams and brawls and shrieks and howls.

She sits detached, undone—
Calm in her storm, with empty hands.
Inside the deadness lies
Submission from threats, un-tender life
That bruises the silent keeper
With a plain open face.
She sits while people masks,
The keepers of a torn-down world,
Smile like a sea of love
Then turn from her abandonedness—
My cradle till lullabies still and I
Fall in a fallen world.

Fey MacDonald

T7.1-3